

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-11 ISO-00 IO-13 ACDA-12 CIAE-00

DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00

EB-08 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15

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-----023711 311644Z /41

O 311600Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO 8#:/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9600

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

MAMEMBASSY MOSCOW 069

AMEMBASSY PARIS

US INT HAVANA 009

S E C R E T NOUAKCHOTT 1437

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: XAK, CU, UR, MPOL

SUBJ: SOVIET AND CUBAN ROLE IN AFRICA

REF: STATE 134913

1. HOST GOVERNMENT PERCEPTIONS: ALTHOUGH UNWILLING TO DENOUNCE IN PUBLIC SOVIET AND CUBAN ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA, MAURITANIAN LEADERS LOSE NO OCCASION TO BEMOAN SUCH ACTIVITIES IN THEIR CONVERSATIONS WITH AMERICANS. MAURITANIANS ARE RELATIVELY NEW ARRIVALS IN "MODERATE" AFRICAN CAMP, BUT NONETHELESS, WE HAVE IMPRESSION THAT THEIR UNEASE IS GENUINE. MAURITANIANS' CONCERN IS, OF COURSE, CLOSELY LINKED WITH PROBLEM OF SAHARA WAR AND WITH THEIR CONVICTION THAT ALGERIANS ARE SURROGATES IN SOVIET AND CUBAN ATTEMPT TO UNDERMINE MODERATE AFRICAN REGIMES AND TO DESTABLIZE CONTINENT GENERALLY. THUS, MAURITANIANS MADE MUCH OF ZAIRE'S CHARGES OF ALGERIAN INVOLVE-  
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MENT WITH REBELS DURING RECENT FIGHTING IN SHABA PROVINCE. CUBAN ACTIVITIES ALSO VIEWED WITH ALARM, AND GIRM EVEN WENT TO LENGTH OF SEIZING SUSPICIOUS CUBAN FISHING VESSEL LAST WINTER, RELEASING IT ONLY AFTER HIGH-LEVEL INTERVENTION FROM IRAQ. IN BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH SOVIETS, MAURITANIAN LEADERS SEEM TO RECOGNIZE NEED FOR MAINTAINING CORRECT, IF NOT CORDIAL, RELATIONSHIP AND SEEK TO USE SOMEWHAT AMBIVALENT

SOVIET STANCE ON SAHARA QUESTION TO THEIR OWN ADVANTAGE, FOR  
EXAMPLE BY TRYING TO SIGN FISHING AGREEMENT SIMILAR TO THAT  
RECENTLY CONCLUDED BETWEEN USSR AND MOROCCO.

2. VIEW OF ATTENDANT PROBLEMS: MAURITANIANS SEE SOVIET AND  
CUBAN ACTIVITIES AS AIMED AT ASSERTING COMMUNIST DOMINATION OVER  
ENTIRE AFRICAN CONTINENT. TENSIONS FROM SAHARA, TO HORN, TO  
ZAIRE AND ANGOLA VIEWED IN THIS LIGHT. LEADERS HERE SEE  
DIFFICULTIES IN AFRICA AS PART OF WORLDWIDE SOVIET EFFORT TO  
GAIN UPPER HAND OVER WEST IN FACE OF SEEMING US RELUCTANCE TO  
BECOME DIRECTLY INVOLVED COMBATTING SOVIET INFLUENCE IN THIRD  
WORLD.

3. PRESCRIPTION FOR HANDLING PROBLEMS: MAURITANIANS AT AND  
NEAR TOP OF HEAP CONSTANTLY CALL UPON US TO RECOGNIZE DANGER  
POSED BY SOVIET AND CUBAN ACTIONS IN AFRICA. AS NOTED ABOVE,  
LEADERSHIP HERE SEES ALGERIANS AND POLISARIO AS DIRECT AGENTS  
OF SOVIETS, AND LOW KEY MAURITANIAN APPEALS FOR GREATER U.S.  
POLITICAL AND MATERIAL SUPPORT FOR MOROCCAN-MAURITANIAN CAUSE  
IN SAHARA WAR ARE THUS BASED ON RATIONALE THAT SUCH SUPPORT  
WOULD TEND TO FRUSTRATE MOSCOW'S AND HAVANA'S DESIGNS.  
BEYOND THIS, HOWEVER, MAURITANIANS HAVE GIVEN US FEW PRESCRIP-  
TIONS FOR MEETING SOVIET AND CUBAN PRESSURES.

4. DIVISIVENESS OF SOVIET AND CUBAN ROLE: MAURITANIANS TEND  
TO SEE SOVIET AND CUBAN ACTIVITIES AS DIVIDING AFRICA, AND  
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OTHER AREAS OF THIRD WORLD, INTO MODERATE AND RADICAL CAMPS.  
THIS IS NOT A MAJOR THEME IN THEIR THINKING, HOWEVER, AND  
THEY ARE QUITE WILLING TO CULTIVATE AFRICAN AND OTHER  
RADICALS WHEN IT SUITS THEM TO DO SO. LIBYA AND IRAQ ARE  
GOOD CASES IN POINT, AND MAURITANIANS ALSO SEEK GOOD RELATIONS  
WITH LESSER AFRICAN RADICALS WHO HAVE ALIGNED THEMSELVES WITH  
ALGERIANS AND POLISARIO ON SAHARA QUESTION. DUNBAR

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